

This spring has not only been the season to bash Bruce, but to trash Tracy. Ok, maybe Tracy Chapman hasn't fulfilled the promise of her debut, yet. But her new album *Matters of the Heart* (Elektra) is nowhere as bad as some critics would have you believe. Sure, in the big four years she's been on the scene, her writing hasn't grown all that much and when writing on the state of the world she tends to be naive and simplistic. But she's singing about a world where things are outrageously wrong and she's got a damn good right to be outraged. She even acknowledges it in "Dreaming On a World," with the lines "I know I may be wishing/On a world/That may never be/But I'll keep on wishing." So the arrangements aren't unique, even ordinary, and there's nothing really special like "Fast Car," but that doesn't mean she's not singing it like she means it and feels it. On *Matters of the Heart*, she most certainly is.

Opening is Nigerian Majek Fashek and his very hot band The Prisoners of Conscience. Their album *Spirit of Love* (Interscope) is one of the best blends of reggae and Afropop I've heard yet. Majek sings with the clear intensity of Bob Marley and his band covers a lot of ground from Africa all the way to Memphis. True to Rastafarianism, there's lots of Haile Selassie references, but he takes it quite a bit further than typical spouting with songs like "Religion Is Politics." Even if you can't get behind the lyrics, you'll find the music irresistible.

Tracy Chapman, with Majek Fashek: Sun., June 7 at 8 p.m. at the Tower Theater, 69th and Ludlow Sts., Upper Darby, \$20, 352-0313.

--Peter Brown